

THE REHEARSAL.

1. The wrong Notions of the *Heathen* in several things, for want of *Revelation*: Particularly as to *Government*.
2. Concerning *Oral Tradition*.
3. *Actions* better Transmitted than *Opinions*.
4. The Mischiefs of *Oral Tradition*.
5. Objection against the *Soul* being *Material*.
6. Dr. Coward's Answer to *Matth. x. 28*.

WEDNESDAY, May 7. 1707.

(1.) *Rehearsal*.

I Broke off short last time in shewing you how the *Heathen Philosophers* had Bewilder'd themselves, for want of *Revelation*, in their *Conjectures* about the Beginning of the *World*.

I have shew'd before how they ran into the like mistakes concerning the *Original of Government*: for they not knowing how the *World* or *Mankind* began, Fancy'd to themselves *Original States of Nature*, such as never were in the *World*, of *Men* all *Loose* and *Independent* of Each other; and how they *Contriv'd* and *Erected GOVERNMENT*, for their own *Convenience*, and by their own *Authority*. But that as soon as they Embrac'd *Christianity*, and were Instructed out of the *Holy Scriptures*, they threw away all these foolish *Imaginations*, and believ'd *Government* to have been Founded by *God*, and to be vested with His *Authority*. But our *Whiggs* Quote their *Sayings* while they were *Heathen*, but Reject them after they became *Christians*; and run down the *Holy Scriptures*, whence they had their *Information*. All which I have before Abundantly shew'd.

(2.) *Country-m.* We are not now upon the Subject of *Government*. But I have a *Question* to Ask you upon what you said last time. You said, That the *Notion* of the *Immortality* of the *Soul*, you suppos'd, had Descended to the *Heathen Philosophers* by *Immemorial Tradition* from the Beginning of the *World*, and so to be Founded upon the first *Revelation* given of it to *Adam*. Will not this be a strong *Proof* of that *Oral Tradition* so much Contended for by the *Papists*?

Rehears. Rather against it, *Country-man*. For that *Notion* of the *Immortality* of the *Soul* was Lost among many of the *Heathen Philosophers* and *Nations*. And they who set it up, and from whom others of them afterwards took it, were such as we have all Reason to Believe were not only Conversant among the *Jews*, but had got a sight of their *Scriptures* of the *Old Testament*. So that the *Written Tradition* Preserv'd the *Oral*, and with-

out it the *Oral* fail'd. We cannot Suppose the *Egyptians* to have been Ignorant of the *Jewish Religion*, among whom the *Israelites* sojourn'd 430 Years. And *Egypt* was then the Great Fountain of *Learning*. And from them to the *Chaldeans*, and then to the *Greeks* and *Romans*, the Transition is Easie. *Plato* said many things almost in the words of the *Scriptures*. Not to mention *Seneca*, and others Later, who Flourish'd after the *Gospel* was Publish'd.

(3.) *Country-m.* But you say, That several *Institutions*, as of *Sacrifice*, *Priesthood*, *Marriage*, &c. were kept up among the *Heathen*, and these were *Universally* kept up, by all sorts of *People*: Why was not then that *Notion* of the *Immortality* of the *Soul* as *Universally* and *Steddily* carry'd on, as these other *Institutions*?

Rehears. The *Belief* of the *Immortality* of the *Soul*, or of any thing else, is an Act of the *Mind*. It is nothing to be outwardly done: And outward *Actions* are much Easier kept up, and Transmitted from hand to hand, than *Opinions* or *Notions* of things; which may Vary and Change by Degrees in ones own *Mind*, and so to others, without any *Publick Notice* being taken of it.

Country-m. I profess I find this Plainly. For tho' I have Forgot twenty of those Foolish *Plays* I us'd when I was a *Boy*, yet when I see *Boys* in the *Street* at those same *Plays*, it brings them into my *Mind* again, and I can Remember since I was at those same *Plays* my self. Thus I see *Traditions* are kept up in *Actions*, even among *Children*. But I remember not a word of what I Thought at that Age. Thus *Actions* may be kept up, when the *Beginning* or *Reason* of them may be Quite Forgot and Lost. I doubt not but ther was a *Beginning* and a *Reason* too for that *Custom* now among us of Throwing at *Cocks* on *Shrove-tide*. But that is not known with any of us *Country-Folks*; But the *Custom* is still kept up, and a *Boy* that were Hinder'd from this, wou'd be Apt to *Rebell*, as for his *Liberty* and *Property*!

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(4.) *Rehears.* The Reason of that Custom is an Oral Tradition, and it is Lost; because it was not put into Writing, and such Books Transmitted down to us. God order'd Moses to Write the Law that He gave him in a Book, and that that Book shou'd be carefully kept, and Transmitted down to Posterity. Why do's the Church of Rome take such Care to Write and Print the Acts of their Councils, and the suppos'd Decretals of their Popes, and their senseless Legends? Cannot they Trust their Oral Tradition with all these, to which they Trust even their Faith? It is Evident that the Cabala or Oral Tradition of the Jews is the main Handle with them to Pervert their own Scriptures, and Harden them against their True Messiah. And thus in the Church of Rome, their Oral Tradition is the Interpreter of all Scriptures.

(5.) *Country-m.* I am sufficiently Satisfy'd in this Point. Now let us Return to Dr. Coward. You have Excus'd me from his Philosophical Niceties. But I will only say thus much in my Plain Natural way, That it seems to me Incomprehensible, how a Piece of Earth can be wrought up to the Capacity of Thinking, and having Free will and Choice; but much more how it shou'd have a Conscience, and Sense of Moral or Im-Moral Actions; but above all, how it can have any Religion, or the Knowledge of a God. Can bare Matter do all this? If you come in with what Omnipotence can do, there I am stop't! But I only observe, That when Omnipotence is Pleaded on Account of the Incarnation, Resurrection, and other Mysteries of our Religion, these Men Laugh at it, and call it a Subterfuge for Ignorance. Yet they themselves Recur to it in Philosophical Disputes, where they Pretend to Judge only by Reason!

But now the Issue betwixt Dr. Coward and me is brought only to Scripture. And you tell me of several Answers have been Wrote to him. But let me Come in with my Clutch-Fist, I will not Dally with him, nor go about to Trip, I'll Knock him Down at once. I fancy I have as good skill in the Scriptures as he, for I Read them as oft, I believe, in my Family, and go as oft to Church as the Doctor.

(6.) And now I begin with him. What do's he say to that Text Matth. x. 28. Fear not them which can kill the Body, but are not able to kill the Soul?

Rehears. He says in his Second Thoughts, 1st. Edit. p. 281. and 2d. Edit. p. 162. And in his Farther Thoughts, p. 38. That by Soul here no more is meant but Life, that is, the Life of the Body.

Country-m. Then the Text runs thus according to his Interpretation, Fear not them which can Kill the Body, but are not able to Kill the Life of the Body.

Rehears. He says in the Places before Quoted, that to Kill the Life is not a Proper expression, and to Kill the Soul is, says he, as Great a SOLACISM, because the Soul means no more than the Life. And therefore says

he, As to the literal Expression of Killing the Soul, I have no Reason to be Bound by it.

Country-m. This is fair Play. He will not be Bound by the Expressions of Scripture! He had as good say, Throw them all away, for I will not be Bound by them. This is his Meaning throughout. He calls this Expression a Solacism, that is, I suppose, a Blunder or Non-Sense. But it is his Interpretation only that makes it so. That Men are not able to Kill the Soul, in our sense of the Word, is Plain and Easy. But if by the Soul no more is Meant than the Life of the Body, then indeed it is Non-Sense, Solacism, and what he will. And if he had any Regard to the Scripture, this wou'd be enough to turn him from his Opinion, that it makes Non-sense of the Scriptures. It makes St. Matthew say, That a Man may Kill the Body, and yet not take away the Life of the Body.

Rehears. He says, there are several Figurative Expressions, which must not be taken Literally, as, This is my Body, &c.

Country-m. But where is the Figure in this of St. Matthew? Ther is none but what he makes, to suppose that the Soul means no more than the Life of the Body. And this makes the Text, as he says, a Solacism. In a Figure, if we put the thing Meant instead of the Figure, it makes the Expression Plain. As This is the Representative of my Body. But it is Quite Contrary here, for to put the Life of the Body for the word Soul, which the Dr. says is the true Meaning, is that which makes the Solacism, and all the Difficulty. The Expression is Easy in the Literal Sense.

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